

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----281713Z 118211 /47
O 281415Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3728

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 7690

NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: TECH, PFOR, IN
SUBJECT: NON-PROLIFERATION: TARAPUR

REFERENCE: NEW DELHI 7675

1. I HAD MY FOLLOW UP DISCUSSION WITH FOREIGN SECRETARY MEHTA ON MAY 28 AND, AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED, THE OFFICIALS FOUND MUCH TO QUESTION BUT NOTHING DEVELOPED TO ALTER THE CONCLUSIONS I HAD MADE FOLLOWING MY TALK WITH THE PRIME MINISTER. ALSO ATTENDING WERE V. SHANKAR, WHO HEADS THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, AND M.A. VELLODI, WHO HANDLES NUCLEAR MATTERS IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. MY STATEMENT ABOUT THE EFFECT ON OUR COOPERATION OF ANOTHER NUCLEAR TEST STIMULATED NO RPT NO COMMENT. MY SKETCHING OUT OF WHERE WE HOPED NEGOTIATIONS WOULD LEAD US BROUGHT FORTH RECITATIONS OF THE HISTORY OF OUR NUCLEAR AGREEMENTS AND COOPERATION AND SOME RE-HEARSING OF INDIAN OPENING POSITIONS IN NEGOTIATION (THEY WILL BE TOUGH). FOR THE MOST PART, I FOUND THE CONVERSATION INTERESTING FOR THE INDICATIONS IT GAVE ABOUT INDIAN REQUIREMENTS FOR THE NEGOTIATIONS AND THEIR SENSITIVITIES.

2. I FOUND CONSIDERABLE INDIAN INTEREST IN WHETHER OR NOT WE WERE MAKING INDIA SPECIAL CASE AND DISCRIMINATING AGAINST IT. FOR EXAMPLE, SHANKAR ASKED WHAT PARTS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS WOULD BE PECULIAR TO INDIA AND WHAT PARTS OF UNIVERSAL APPLICATION. I
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ANSWERED THAT ONLY THOSE TECHNICAL MATTERS PERTAINING TO TARAPUR AND US HEAVY WATER WOULD BE PECULIAR TO INDIA. MEHTA WORRIED OVER WHAT HE SAW AS AN IMPLICATION IN THE PRESIDENTS POLICY THAT IT WOULD HAVE A DIFFERENT BEARING ON DIFFERENT COUNTRIES. I REPLIED THAT IN MY DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PRESIDENT AND OTHERS IN WASHINGTON THERE WAS A DEFINITE DESIRE TO TREAT INDIA AS WE TREATED OTHER COUNTRIES; THERE WAS NO DISPOSITION TO BE DISCRIMINATING OR PUNA-

TIVE. SHANKAR COMMENTED THAT ONE OF THE THINGS WHICH RANKLED THE PRIME MINISTER WAS OUR CONTINUED TESTING; HE CONSIDERED EXAMPLE BETTER THAN PRECEPT.

3. IT BECAME APPARENT IN THE DISCUSSION THAT THE INDIANS HAVE A MAJOR POLITICAL PROBLEM IN THEIR NEGOTIATIONS WITH US. SHANKAR SPOKE OF THE PUBLIC PSYCHOLOGY IN INDIA, SAYING THAT THERE WAS A FEELING THAT INDIA HAD KEPT TO ITS AGREEMENT WITH US. ANY REOPENING OF THAT AGREEMENT WHICH PREVENTED FULFILLMENT OF ITS PURPOSE, PRODUCTION OF POWER FOR THE PUBLIC, WOULD CREATE A FIRST CLASS POLITICAL PROBLEM. HE SAID THAT CONSIDERABLE HEAT WAS ALSO RAISED BY THE QUESTION OF WHY INDIAN ASSURANCES REGARDING PEACEFUL USES HAD NOT BEEN ACCEPTED. I FIND CONSIDERABLE VALIDITY TO SHANKAR'S POINT ABOUT THEIR POLITICAL PROBLEM. INDIA NOW HAS A VERY OPEN DEMOCRACY AND ALREADY THE LEFT PRESS IS BEGINNING TO ATTACK THE GOVT FOR PREPARING TO SELL OUT TO THE US ON NUCLEAR POLICY.

4. THE TIMING OF THE NEGOTIATIONS IS ALSO A PROBLEM TO THE INDIANS. SHANKAR SAID THAT HE DOUBTED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD WANT THE POLICY NEGOTIATIONS TO TAKE PLACE UNTIL AFTER THE NEXT SESSION OF PARLIAMENT, WHICH WOULD BE CONCLUDED AUGUST FIFTH. THEY WOULD NOT WANT OUTBURSTS IN PARLIAMENT TO INTERFERE. VELLODI SAID THAT THEIR ESTIMATE WAS THAT THE PRESIDENT'S LEGISLATION WAS NOT LIKELY TO PASS UNTIL SEPTEMBER OR OCTOBER AND ASKED IF WE WANTED TO HAVE NEGOTIATIONS IN THE INTERIM OR THEREAFTER. I REPLIED THAT I HAD NO INSTRUCTIONS BUT WE WANTED TO TALK SOON WITH SOME INDIAN OFFICIAL ABOUT STRUCTURING NEGOTIATIONS. MEHTA COMMENTED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER ARE BOTH CONFIDENTIAL

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TRAVELING ABROAD AND WOULD REQUIRE TIME FOR CABINET DISCUSSION OF SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES AFTER THEIR RETURN. SHANKAR SAID THEY WOULD NEED TIME TO GET POLICY GUIDANCE. WE CONCLUDED THAT DISCUSSIONS ON TECHNICAL ISSUES WHICH HAD TO BE RSOLVED TO KEEP TARAPUR IN OPERATION (E.G. SPENT FUEL STORAGE SHOULD BEGIN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE BUT MORE TIME WOULD BE REQUIRED BEFORE BROADER POLICY DISCUSSIONS COULD BE BEGUN. I SUSPECT THAT THEY WANT TO DELAY NOT ONLY FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL REASONS BUT THEY ALSO WANT TO FIND OUT THE DIRECTION OF US POLICY AND THE TREND IN OUR NEGOTIATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES.

5. I FOUND, OF COURSE, GREAT SENSITIVITY ABOUT OUR AGREEMENT ON TARAPUR (THEY STRONGLY FEEL THAT THEY HAVE OBSERVED IT IN FULL), WHETHER WE INTEND TO RENEGOTIATE IT, AND WHETHER THE TARAPUR POWER OUTPUT WILL BE CURTAILED. I POINTED OUT THAT MUCH TIME HAD GONE BY SINCE THE AGREEMENT HAD BEEN CONCLUDED; WE HAD BECOME AWARE OF NEW PROBLEMS AND THE INDIAN PROGRAM HAD MOVED IN THE DIRECTION OF REPROCESSING AND BREEDER REACTORS. THE US HAD MADE A REVIEW OF ITS POLICY AND WISHED JOINTLY TO EXPLORE WITH THE GOI

IN GOOD FAITH AND ON THE BASIS OF EQUALITY HOW OUR NEW PERCEPTIONS
AND POLICIES MIGHT FIT WITH INDIAN POLICIES.

6. I CONCLUDE THAT A BEGINNING HAS BEEN MADE BUT THAT NEGOTIATIONS
WILL BE LONG AND DIFFICULT. I BELIEVE THAT THE WAY WE APPROACH
THE INDIANS WILL HAVE MUCH TO DO WITH OUR PROSPECTS FOR SUCCESS.
I HOPE WE CAN BE SENSITIVE TO THE CONCERNS THEY EXPRESSED TO ME
TODAY NOT WITH THE VIEW OF MAKING CONCESSIONS BUT RATHER OF BETTER
ATTAINING OUR OBJECTIVES.

7. THE DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO REPEAT THIS MESSAGE TO THE
SECRETARY IN PARIS
GOHEEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION, MEETING REPORTS, NEGOTIATIONS, NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS, CAT-A
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 28-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977NEWDE07690
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: P840086-2503, N770003-0550
Format: TEL
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t1977056/aaaaafcz.tel
Line Count: 129
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 0ca7a494-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: 77 NEW DELHI 7675
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2529645
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NON-PROLIFERATION: TARAPUR
TAGS: TECH, PFOR, PARM, IN, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/0ca7a494-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009